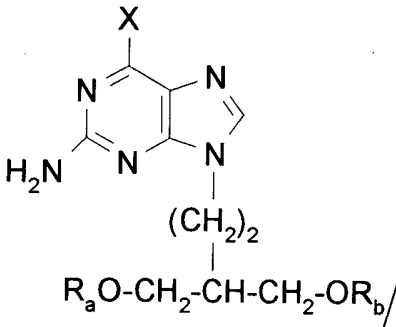
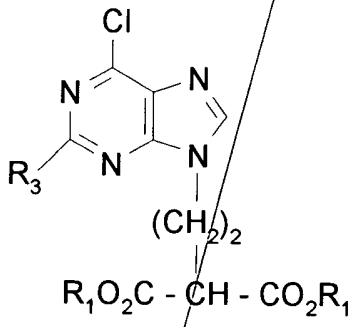


(A)

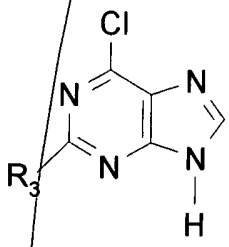
wherein:
X is hydrogen or hydroxy; and R_a and R_b are hydrogen or acetyl, which process comprises:

(i) the preparation of a compound of formula (I):



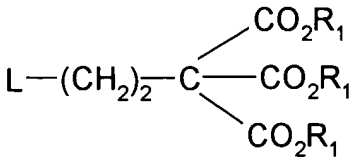
(I)

wherein R_1 is C_{1-6} alkyl, or phenyl C_{1-6} alkyl in which the phenyl group is optionally substituted; and R_3 is an amino group or a protected amino group, which preparation comprises the reaction of a compound of formula (II):



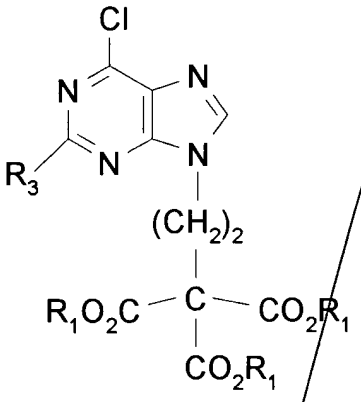
(II)

wherein R_3 is as defined above for formula (I), with a compound of formula (V):



(V)

wherein L is a leaving group and R_1 is as defined for formula (I), to give a compound of formula (VI):



(VI)

and thereafter converting the intermediate compound of formula (VI) to a compound of formula (I) via decarboxylation; and

(ii) conversion of the resulting compound of formula (I) to a compound of formula (A) by:

a) removal, if necessary, of the amino protecting group;

b) reducing the ester groups CO_2R_1 to CH_2OH groups, and, if necessary, acetylating to form the corresponding CH_2OAc groups; and

c) dechlorinating via a hydrogenolysis reaction to yield a compound of Formula (A) in which X is hydrogen; or dechlorinating via a hydrolysis reaction to yield a compound of Formula (A) in which X is hydroxy.

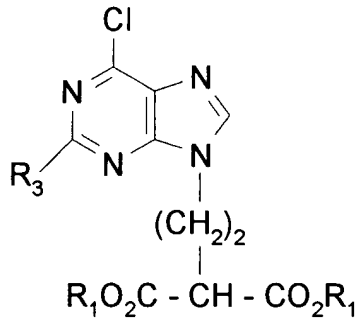
11. A process according to claim 10 wherein, in the compound of formula (V), R_1 is C_{1-6} alkyl and L is halogen.

12. A process according to claim 11, wherein L is bromo.

13. A process according to claim 10, wherein R_1 is methyl or ethyl.

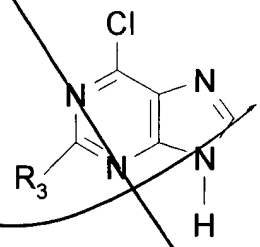
14. A process according to claim 10 wherein decarboxylation of the compound of formula (VI) is effected by the addition of about 0.42 equivalents of sodium methoxide.

15. A process for the preparation of a compound of formula (I):



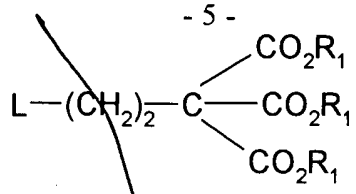
(I)

wherein R_1 is C_{1-6} alkyl, or phenyl C_{1-6} alkyl in which the phenyl group is optionally substituted; and R_3 is an amino group or a protected amino group, which preparation comprises the reaction of a compound of formula (II):



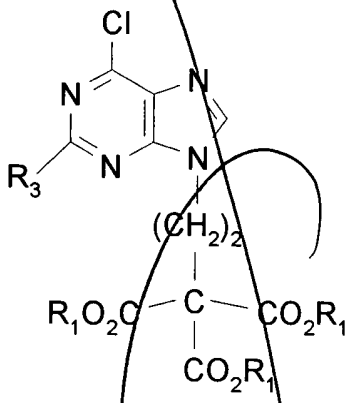
(II)

wherein R_3 is as defined for formula (I), with a compound of formula (V):



(V)

wherein L is a leaving group and R_1 is as defined for formula (I), to give a compound of formula (VI):



(VI)

and thereafter converting the intermediate compound of formula (VI) to a compound of formula (I) via decarboxylation.

16. A process according to claim 15 wherein, in the compound of formula (V), R_1 is C_{1-6} alkyl and L is halogen.

17. A process according to claim 16, wherein L is bromo.

18. A process according to claim 15, wherein R_1 is methyl or ethyl.

19. A process according to claim 15 for the preparation of 9-(4-acetoxy-3-acetoxymethylbut-1-yl)-2-amino-6-chloropurine.

20. A process according to claim 15 wherein decarboxylation of the compound of formula (VI) is effected by the addition of about 0.42 equivalents of sodium methoxide.